

CHAPTER VII

RECREATION

Free public recreational facilities for both whites and Negroes are inadequate in North Carolina. Negroes especially are almost completely dependent upon commercialized recreation for fulfillment of their leisure-time needs. This most impoverished group finds practically all of its recreational outlet in fields demanding the expenditure of money.

In too many communities in North Carolina, when Negroes find recreation, it is undesirable. Usually the leisure-time pursuits of Negroes are limited to public or subscription dances, pool rooms, "juke joints," beer parlors, night clubs, the movies; also there is increasing use of parks and swimming pools in urban areas where they are available. Commercial recreation activities have grown so rapidly among Negroes that they form one of the most important parts of the economic structure of the Negro community. They occupy a place almost equal to other small businesses and services (i.e., restaurants, beauty parlors, grocery stores, and barber shops).

In 1943, a State Recreation Committee was appointed in North Carolina. This committee was composed of some forty members appointed by the Governor and represented all recreation interests of the State. As a result of two years' promotional and educational work by the Committee, the 1945 Legislature created a Recreation Commission. The North Carolina Recreation Commission is the first legally established state recreation agency to provide state machinery and funds in fulfillment of its responsibilities in this area. Negroes have served on both the Committee and Commission. Since 1949, there has been a Negro on the professional staff of the North Carolina Recreation Commission to make studies on recreational needs, to develop leadership programs, and to assist people in local communities to understand and meet their recreation problems.

Since 1945, recreation facilities and programs of leisure-time activities have had unprecedented growth in North Carolina. They have been given a new status and are playing a dynamic role in the lives of the whole population. This new upsurge